

## Missionary Qualities for Every Christian *'Royally Humble!'*

Passages: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21  
Matthew 10:40-42

Although it was the **Apostle Paul** who, in 2 Corinthians 5, first used the word "ambassador" to describe the work of Christian evangelism, it was surely **Jesus Christ** who first described this concept.

In today's passage from Matthew 10, Jesus sends out His apostles with these instructions: ***"Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me."*** Embedded in those words is the notion of being an **'Ambassador' for the Kingdom of God**.

This is the concept we want to discuss today as we conclude our sermon series entitled *"Missionary Qualities for Every Christian"*. Today we look at the missionary quality which I have chosen to call, being *"Royally Humble"*.

### **Let's pray.**

What did the Apostle Paul mean when he wrote, ***"We are, therefore, Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us"***? The dictionary defines ambassador in this way:

*An ambassador is "an official envoy or messenger, appointed for the special diplomatic assignment of representing his/her government in a foreign land, before a foreign state, to negotiate peaceful relationships and alliances."*

**To carry out his/her mission, an ambassador must possess two essential qualities:**

#### **1. An ambassador must be 'Royal'.**

- Because an Ambassador represents Royalty, he/she must walk with an air of royal dignity and confidence.
- An Ambassador must have royally informed convictions in order to speak with conviction and courage.

- Out of respect for the One he/she represents, an Ambassador must be careful with language and not resort to empty rhetoric.
- An Ambassador must bring royal wisdom into each and every situation, skilfully manoeuvring to challenge bad thinking and to present the perspective of the One he/she represents in an understandable and compelling way.
- An Ambassador always remembers that effectiveness of his/her office is totally dependent on the authority which flows from the One he/she represents.

2. **An ambassador must be Humble.** Because an Ambassador lives and works on foreign soil, the ambassador is tremendously vulnerable . Therefore...

- An Ambassador will always act with grace, kindness, and good manners towards his/her hosts.
- An Ambassador is provisional in his/her claims, knowing that his understanding of the larger picture is limited and, thus, fallible.
- An Ambassador won't quarrel, but will listen in order to understand.
- An Ambassador will be sympathetic and understanding towards others and will acknowledge the merits of contrary views.
- An Ambassador will not press a point beyond what the evidence allows.
- An Ambassador will be careful with the facts and will not misrepresent, overstate, or understate the perspective of the One he/she represents.

To put these two ideas into the language of today's passage from Matthew 10, an ambassador for Christ must:

1. **Speak 'prophetically'**, according to his/her royal status as an envoy, and
2. **Act 'righteously'**, according to the humility of his/her situation as a guest in a foreign land.

Of course, it was the OT prophets who were God's first 'Ambassadors'. They spoke **prophetically**, based solely on the royal authority of the One who sent them. They also acted **righteously**, humbly recognising that their actions had to be a direct reflection of God's character.

**There was, however, a 400-year hiatus in Israel's history where God stopped sending His ambassadors.** Why? Because no one in Israel was willing to listen to them! Jesus made this very accusation when, in Matthew 23, He wept over Jerusalem, saying, ***"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone***

***those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.”***

Thankfully, God resumed His ambassadorial relationships with this planet at the start of the NT era! Indeed, **we could say that Jesus, Himself, was the greatest of all God’s ambassadors.** His incarnation interrupted God’s 400-year long silence! He was *sent down* from His Father’s ‘Heavenly throne’ into the “foreign” land of Israel in order to represent the Father’s wishes to a hard-hearted people. And although He always spoke in a forthright manner, honouring the One who sent Him, He also acted in ways that were humble, kind, and gracious. In other words, **He spoke “prophetically”**, revealing the will of His Father’s Kingdom, and **He always acted “righteously”**, with incredible humility and grace.

In this way, Jesus continually won a hearing amongst the people. In fact, as Jesus makes clear in an earlier passage in Matthew 10, those people who did receive Him into their villages and homes were, in fact, receiving the Father who sent Him; while those who dismissed and abused Him were, in fact, dismissing and abusing the One who sent Him. In verses 32 and 33, Jesus says,

***<sup>32</sup> “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. <sup>33</sup> But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.***

Jesus was the Father’s **Ambassador!**

This same ‘ambassadorial principle’ is again on view in today’s passage, but this time it’s the Apostles who are being called to go out as **ambassadors—ambassadors for Jesus!** Listen again to verse 40:

***<sup>40</sup> “Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.”***

You might say that the 12 apostles were to be ‘ambassadors of the Ambassador’! That is, the Father had sent the Son as the primary Ambassador; and the Son now sends His 12 apostles as His secondary ambassadors. Nevertheless, the exact same pattern applies. They are also called to do two key things:

1. **They must speak prophetically**, with royal authority, about the invisible reality of the Father's Kingdom, and,
2. **They must act righteously**, in great humility and with great respect for the people to whom they are being sent.

Once again, keep in mind the definition of an ambassador: *An Ambassador is someone who negotiates for peaceful relationships and alliances between two kingdoms or countries.* The Apostles were being sent out as Jesus' ambassadors, not to forcibly conquer lands or make nations submit to His rule, but **to negotiate an alliance of understanding and reconciliation.**

In this sense, the Apostles' mission was really quite simple: They were to engage with people on a personal, relational level, and always with a **Royally Humble** attitude! As people welcomed them into their homes and hearts, mutual trust and friendship would increase! This mutual respect would mean that any previous suspicions or antipathy against God and His Kingdom would gradually be overcome! Within this relational context, the Kingdom of Heaven could be proclaimed.

Hence, Jesus could offer these final words of advice to His 12 disciples as He sent them out (verses 41-42):

**<sup>41</sup> *Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward.* <sup>42</sup> *And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.***

Now, let's stop and really reflect on what Jesus is saying here. You see, I believe that this is evangelism at its most basic!

V. 41a-- ***"Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward..."***

Imagine the apostles being welcomed into villages and homes around Israel. Now imagine that a group of men are sitting around a fire after dinner having a friendly chat, and a subject is raised to which an apostle feels compelled to

respond with ambassadorial conviction-- "*Here's what Jesus, the One who sent me, would say about this.*" In other words, he injects a **prophetic opinion** into this casual conversation, That is, he speaks on behalf of Jesus, His Lord with both a **royal authority**, mixed with great **humility** (with a sincerity, calm, grace and respect for the opinions of others). Now, imagine that the people of this village agree with his opinion. However, all they have believed so far is that he has spoken **prophetically**. And so, at the end of the day, they accept his word as if he's *a prophet* speaking on behalf of God.

What do you think Jesus would say about that? **After all, no one has necessarily been converted. No one has repented of their sins. No one has suddenly jumped up and said, "I get it—Jesus is the Son of God!"**

As this verse makes clear, Jesus would still be incredibly happy! "***Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward...***"

Do you see what's going on, here? Jesus is pleased! He is pleased that there is a *detectable movement towards Him and His Kingdom* that is taking place in people's minds and hearts! Through one of His ambassadors, a few more people have heard and begun to accept (to some degree, at least) the '*royal ways of the Kingdom of God*'. Their worldview has begun to shift! In fact, not only is Jesus *pleased* with this small movement in their thinking, but He *rewards* them for this! What reward does Jesus give? I'm not totally sure, but **could it be that** (as they open the door... even the slightest... to His word and grace) **He gives them a bit more of His Spirit?**

(I've spoken about this before—this is *the centred set idea of evangelism*, as opposed to *the bounded set idea of evangelism*.)

Furthermore, the pleasure of Jesus is not only upon those who hear *the prophetic word* of His ambassadors, but He's also pleased with those who acknowledge *the righteous deeds* of His ambassadors. In the second half of that verse, Jesus continues;

V. 41b—"***...and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward.***"

Once again, try to imagine the scene: Jesus' apostles are going out to towns and villages around Israel. As they go, they reach out in humble, gentle and gracious ways to the people they meet; people who are hurting, or lonely, or fragile, or confused; people who are broken with sickness and pain; people who are struggling with depression or demonic oppression. These ambassadors don't just speak; they also listen, and comfort, and embrace the people they've been sent to.

Now, imagine that it is through these *righteous acts* that the people's hearts and minds are opened, just a tiny bit more, to the One who sent them and to His Kingdom? What would Jesus say about that? He tells us!

***"...and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward."***

Once again, Jesus says that He will reward them for welcoming His ambassadors as 'righteous people'. What reward will he give them? Again, I'm not sure, but could it be that He gives them an increased measure of His Spirit?

Jesus' greatest pleasure, however, is not with those who welcome His Ambassadors as merely *prophets* or *righteous people*. His greatest pleasure comes when He sees people receiving His ambassadors **as His disciples**. In verse 42, Jesus concludes by saying,

***"And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."***

I understand that to mean that anyone who *recognises and responds positively to the presence of Jesus in the face of one of His ambassadors* has, in fact, moved more significantly to acknowledging Jesus as Lord and recognising the reality of His Kingdom. They go beyond accepting Christ's ambassadors as merely 'prophets' or 'righteous people', and, instead, recognise that **Jesus, the Lord, is actually present in the person of His disciple!** They say something like, ***"When I met you, I knew that something was different. Everything about you oozes with the presence of the One who sent you."*** And that's why they give a

cup of cold water to you...a sign of welcoming you in as if you were Jesus Himself!

Isn't that the goal of being **Christ's ambassadors**? To be so aligned with the One who sends us that people deal with us *as if they were dealing with Jesus, Himself!* After all, the Bible says that we are His 'new creation'—called to be *reflections of Jesus* in this dark world. If people see this reality in us, they will be enticed to move **towards Jesus!**

As a matter of fact, **the Bible offers no other way to do evangelism!** There is no "plan B"! If we are not reflections of Christ to an unbelieving world...if people can't see Jesus in us... if they can't see the image of Christ in both our *royal convictions* and in our *humble actions*...then **how can anyone ever respond to us with cups of cold water because they see that we're Christ's disciples?** Most importantly, **how will anyone ever receive their reward?**

Let me conclude our thinking on *being Christ's Ambassadors* by reading, again, from Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 5. To you and me... children of God, born again by the Spirit, and sent forth into the world as Christ's Ambassadors... these words were written to be an encouragement:

***<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.***

Let's pray.